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THE AMERICAN NEGRO IS DEAD

... and risen as a black man of the world, soul brother to non-whites everywhere.

Don't look now, honky, but some of his best friends are Vietcong

by William Worthly

"If the dragon of China [would] cooperate with the sacred cow of India, the Sphinx of Egypt with the peacock of Burma, the white elephant of Siam with the hydra of Vietnam, the tiger of the Philippines with the banteng of Indonesia—and if the black panther of Stokely Carmichael would cooperate with all of them—international imperialism and colonialism will certainly be annihilated."

—President Sukarno, 1927, as amended
by Black Power advocates in 1967

One warm night a year ago last July, two F.B.I. agents approached Edward A. Oquendo on a Brooklyn street and asked him to get into their car "for a talk." Oquendo, a twenty-one-year-old Negro who had refused to take a physical examination for the draft, tells the story, "I refused and said that if we had any talking to do we could do it right there. I spoke in a manner which caused the neighbors to gather." Surrounded by a dozen bristling Negroes, the agents hastily left. When they finally arrested Oquendo, it was early in the morning before anybody was on the street, and this time there were four agents, two cars and handcuffs.

Since that time, the United States government has tried to take Oquendo to trial seven times, but it has not succeeded. On each scheduled date he has appeared in the courtroom with an ever-larger coterie of friends and neighbors, dressed in African tribal robes and breathing defiance. Oquendo's trial, like the trials of other Negro draft refusers who can rally this kind of community support, has been postponed repeatedly on government motion.

"Afro-American resistance to the draft is widespread," says Oquendo, who is a member of Youth Against War and Fascism. "If you go down to the Pitkin Avenue draft board in Brownsville, the heart of the Black ghetto in Brooklyn, you will see sheet upon sheet of names, mounting into the hundreds, marked 'delinquent.'" The situation he describes is not unique. Local Draft Board 16, which covers a part of Harlem, recently had a list of six hundred such cases, most of them Negro, a few Puerto Rican. It is doubtful that many of them will ever be inducted or prosecuted, and without exception the "delinquents" have the blessing of the surrounding community.

Throughout the Summer of 1966 an organization called "Black Women Enraged" picketed a Harlem recruiting station, openly urging Negroes not to serve. About the same time, in Detroit, a very religious "Sister Louise," together with some of her hymn-singing friends, swooped down on an Army induction station early one morning, snatched her son out of the line of draftees, and took him home in a taxi. From that day to this, the most powerful government in the world has acted as if the incident never took place.

All these anti-draft cases are subtle manifestations of the complex new force called Black Power. The white populace identifies it somewhat fearfully with the violence of Detroit, Newark, Mil-